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SUBJECT: NOVEMBER 8 MFA PRESS BRIEFING: IRAN, BIBLE BAN,
MEDIA FREEDOM, DPRK DISABLEMENT, VISITS, MORE

1. Key points at the November 8 MFA Press Briefing:

-- China requested that Iran "respond positively" and "attach importance to" the concern of the international community. (Note: some news organizations stated that China "demanded" Iran respond positively. The word in Chinese was "yaoqiu" which can be translated as either "demand" or "request." The MFA interpreter said "request" when translating into English.)

-- Reports on China's alleged banning of Bibles during the upcoming Olympic Games are "sheer rumors."

-- Journalists "must abide by laws" and must be "punished in accordance with law" if they violate laws.

-- Visits: Venezuelan FM Nicolas Maduro will visit November 13-15.

China Requests that Iran "Respond Positively"

1.2. At the November 8 regular MFA press briefing, MFA Spokesman Liu Jianchao, responding to a question on the Iranian President's reportedly calling Iran's nuclear program "irreversible," said China has noticed the developments and requested (yaoqiu) that Iran "respond positively" and "attach importance to" the concern of the international community. China hopes Iran will show flexibility in carrying out dialogue and consultation with relevant parties and that relevant parties pursue peaceful means, including dialogue and consultation, to settle this issue peacefully. China will continue to play "a constructive role in this regard" and is willing to communicate with the UN and EU to push this issue forward to a "proper result."

Reports of Olympic Bible Ban "Sheer Rumors"

1.3. After taking note of reports on China's alleged banning of Bibles during the upcoming Olympic Games, the spokesman characterized such reports as "sheer rumors," and expressed "dissatisfaction" with organizations spreading such rumors. The Government has made no such "stipulations or remarks," Liu said, and "always respects the freedom of religious beliefs of foreigners in China in accordance with the law." Foreigners entering China can bring religious publications, items or products for personal use, added Liu, and there will be no "stipulations" regarding Bibles in the Olympic Village.

Group Calls for Release of Imprisoned Journalists

¶4. Asked about Reporters Without Borders' (RSF) call for the release of China's 33 imprisoned journalists, Liu responded that he did not know what facts the demand was based on, but said journalists "must abide by laws" and must be "punished in accordance with law" if they violate laws.

¶5. Responding to a reporter's suggestion of recent pressure on foreign journalists from the Chinese police, Liu said he fully understands the reporter's concerns and will have his colleagues contact the public security departments for specific information. Liu also suggested that either individuals involved in an incident described by the reporter were not aware of new regulations on foreign journalists or there was an implementation problem. The MFA hopes it can strengthen communication if it was a misunderstanding on the journalists' side, and hopes foreign journalists can have "happy and smooth reporting" in China.

Disablement Underway, Hope for Declaration

¶6. China has taken note of "relevant work" underway in the DPRK and hopes that it will be smoothly implemented and completed in accordance with the October 3 "joint document," Liu said when asked about DPRK disablement. On the question of when North Korea's declaration will begin, Liu stated that the October 3 "joint document" has clear wording on DPRK declaration of nuclear programs which China hopes will be implemented.

Afghanistan, Pakistan, Indonesia

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¶7. China strongly condemns a recent suicide bombing in Afghanistan and expresses its condolences to the victims' families, Liu said in response to a reporter's question. Asked about comments made by President Bush on his support for Pakistani President Musharraf, Liu replied that U.S. policy toward Pakistan is up to the United States. China's position is that the Pakistani Government and people are capable of settling their own problems and China hopes Pakistan can maintain stability and development. The spokesman had not seen any news on a defense agreement between China and Indonesia and referred reporters to the Ministry of Defense for further information.

Visits: Venezuelan FM Maduro, Lee Kuan Yew

¶8. Venezuelan FM Nicolas Maduro will visit November 13-15 at the invitation of FM Yang. Former Singapore PM Lee Kuan Yew has plans to visit China, but the details are still under consultation.
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